

**The Role of Local  
Intermediary  
Organizations in the  
Youth Development Field**

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Prepared for The Edna  
McConnell Clark  
Foundation

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# The Role of Local Intermediary Organizations in the Youth Development Field

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Joan R. Wynn

## I. INTRODUCTION

In such diverse fields as comprehensive community change, youth employment, education, child abuse prevention, and others, the presence and role of intermediary organizations is being recognized as pivotal to endeavors that achieve a scale large enough to matter (Schorr, 1997; Brown University, 1999; Chaskin et al., in press; Pittman, 1999). In *Common Purpose*, Lisbeth Schorr finds that successful efforts at reform and replication: "... have had the continuous backing of an intermediary organization that offered expertise, outside support, legitimization, and clout. . ." (Schorr, 1997, p. 61).<sup>1</sup>

Over the last decade, increasing attention has focused on the youth development field and the importance of youth-serving organizations, which can engage young people in a mix of relationships, opportunities, and supports that build competencies important both in adolescence and adulthood (Pittman & Wright, 1991; Heath & McLaughlin, 1993; Whalen & Wynn, 1995).

As the field of youth development has begun to take shape, a group of new intermediary organizations has emerged to help provide a cohesive vision for the field and support for the organizations in it. At the request of the Edna McConnell Clark Founda-

tion, this study focused on local intermediaries because they are the closest and most consistent resource for building the capacity of youth organizations, enabling them to reach more young people with high-quality programs.

The study included a review of existing literature, interviews with the directors and staff of seven local intermediaries, a review of material written by or about them, and interviews with individuals knowledgeable about local youth development intermediaries including policy makers, funders, and evaluators, as well as individuals familiar with the role of local intermediaries in other sectors.<sup>2</sup>

The report begins with an overview of the youth development field and the organizations in it, highlighting challenges that make the role of local intermediary organizations particularly important. It then discusses the contributions of local youth development intermediaries, the challenges they face, and possible strategies for sustaining their capacity to assist youth organizations in providing more and more effective programs for young people.

## II. THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FIELD

This is a time of substantial opportunity for

### *Acknowledgments*

*This paper would not have been possible without the generosity of the leaders of the intermediary organizations drawn on in this report. Their experience and insights have informed my understanding of local intermediary organizations in the youth development field, including the functions they perform and the challenges they face. I am indebted to Michele Cahill, Deborah Craig, Sue Eldridge, Teddi Gates, Renae Ogletree, Dick Mammen, and Jose Montañó who run and work for the intermediaries included in this report. Special thanks go to Michele Cahill who willingly engaged in long and intensive discussions at a time of transition from the Youth Development Institute she founded and led. I am also grateful to observers of intermediary organizations, funders, researchers, and others, who contributed their experience and observations, and to colleagues, in and outside of Chapin Hall, who offered framing insights and assistance along the way. Jolyon Wurr provided invaluable assistance in researching and writing this report. I, however, am solely responsible for errors of fact or interpretation.*

*Finally, I especially want to thank the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation for an opportunity to learn about local intermediary organizations and to consider their current and potential contributions to a strategy designed to build the field of youth development and the organizations in it in order to bring the benefits of high-quality programs to greater numbers of young people.*

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<sup>1</sup> Like Schorr, the Annenberg Challenge, whose goal is to create and sustain local school reform, has found that "School reform does not happen of its own accord. The business of improving schools requires intense, ongoing facilitation. . . To improve, schools need an 'intermediary' that offers vision, focus, support, and pressure in equal amounts" (Brown University, 1999, p.7).

<sup>2</sup> The seven intermediaries included in this study were selected based on their standing among policy makers, funders, and their peers and because they varied on characteristics like their age, size, and organizational structure. Individuals interviewed are listed in Appendix B.

youth-serving organizations. With 78 percent of mothers of school-age children employed and mothers receiving public assistance now being required to work, there is increased concern that young people on their own are too often victims or perpetrators of violence, engaging in drug use and sexual activity, and missing important sources of support and constructive engagement. In addition, con-

grassroots programs, local free-standing agencies, and affiliates of national youth-serving organizations. In addition, a group of organizations including parks, libraries, museums, and others serve both young people and adults. This typology illuminates the nature and extent of the challenges the organizations face as well as the assistance intermediary organizations can provide.

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cerns about improving the performance of schools and the academic achievement of students has dramatically increased attention to the use of after-school hours for homework help, tutoring, test preparation, and other forms of academic enrichment.

As more localities create dedicated revenue streams for youth programs in places like Pinellas County and Jacksonville Florida, San Francisco, Seattle, and elsewhere, a portion of these funds are flowing to youth-serving organizations. Moreover, the heightened focus on after-school time has brought substantial new revenues from both federal and local governments and private funders. With these enhanced opportunities for youth-serving organizations comes a corresponding need to build and improve the programs and practices of these organizations and their resulting contributions to the young people they serve.

In exploring the organizations that make up the youth development field, we have focused on organizations in urban communities offering programs in which young people of school age—from roughly 6 through 18—can voluntarily participate during the out-of-school hours. Some of these are primarily after-school programs serving school-aged children, and others offer more special-purpose activities for adolescents.

### **Organization Types**

There are three basic types of organizations primarily serving young people. They are

### **Grassroots Programs**

Grassroots programs are usually small, single-site, neighborhood-based programs. These programs are often not organizations at all, but a set of adult-organized activities. They are important, in part, because they are often the most accessible programs in their neighborhoods and the best known by children and parents. They include sports teams, after-school programs, mentoring programs through which adults invest in youth, and rights-of-passage and other ethnic or culturally based groups.

Grassroots programs can be enormously flexible and responsive to the interests of parents and participants. At the same time, they often have to scramble to continue serving young people and to find the adults, facilities, equipment, and other resources necessary to do so. Grassroots programs are often run entirely by volunteers or by an adult who is paid to work part-time and who recruits other adults as volunteers.

Some grassroots programs, particularly those that are not facility-based, like sports teams, are run out of the homes of the adults who lead them. Others use space in and are sometimes sponsored by local organizations, including churches, ethnic associations, and public housing authorities (Quern & Rauner, 1998).

Grassroots programs often lack adequate funds for equipment, transportation, or subsidies for participants who cannot afford even such modest expenses as the cost of team uniforms. Programs not incorporated as 501(c)(3) organizations are ineligible for funding from foundation or government sources.

The life cycle of grassroots programs can be short as adult stamina or youth interests wane. Alternatively some currently robust, local freestanding organizations began as grassroots programs.

### **Local, Free-Standing Organizations**

These locally designed and developed re-

sources are a set of incorporated organizations. They vary in their size, in the scope of the programs they offer, and in the number and ages of their participants. Some are substantial, multipurpose organizations, offering such comprehensive programming as academic enrichment, youth employment, counseling, leadership development, parenting education, career exposure, health education, organized sports, service referrals, summer camps, and more. Others offer more focused, specialized activities such as bicycle repair programs, youth newspapers, sports teams, or arts, music, and theater programs.

In some cases, the distinction between multipurpose and specialized programs corresponds to the age group served. After-school programs serving first- through eighth-grade children tend to provide a fairly consistent and recognizable range of activities that include recreation, homework help, and chances for arts and other forms of self-expression (Halpern, in press). After-school programs usually have more direct adult activity definition and tend to have children who attend multiple afternoons a week. Programs for adolescents often provide more focused, special-purpose activities that vary considerably one from the other with less programmatic overlap. These programs, often allowing for more youth-led contribution, may be offered fewer days a week.

Local, free-standing organizations range in size from one or two full-time staff to over fifty and in budgets from less than \$50,000 to well over \$12 million. Most are based in a facility they rent or more rarely own.

### **National Youth-Serving Organizations**

Local affiliates of national youth-serving organizations, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, YMCAs and YWCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, Scouts, Little Leagues, Girls, Inc., 4-H, and others offer well-known and widespread opportunities for young people. A number of these organizations (like the Boys & Girls Clubs and the Ys) are facility-based, operating from substantial physical facilities they own. Others (like Big Brothers Big Sisters, Scouts, and Little Leagues) are not. In contrast to their facility-based counterparts, these organizations tend to rely on the use of volunteers in their programs. It is

worth noting that 4-H is the only youth-serving organization with a dedicated source of public funding.

The national offices of these local affiliates provide a variety of resource and support functions that include:

- *Program Development.* Many national offices respond to programs developed and implemented by local affiliates by creating the manuals and providing the staff training to support their replication in other sites. Some national offices, Girls, Inc. for example, develop new program approaches, create the curriculum and training for them, and find affiliates to pilot these programs before disseminating them more widely.
- *Technical Assistance and Training.* National offices offer training for frontline staff (on skills needed to work directly with young people and on the delivery of particular programs), for program coordinators (on supervision), and for program directors and other support staff (on such aspects of organizational development as developing data and financial systems).
- *Fund Raising.* To various extents, national offices use their capacity to raise funds centrally from sources like national foundations, corporations, and the federal government and then distribute these funds to local affiliates.
- *Communications.* National offices establish recognition and visibility for local affiliates by, among other things, providing logos and uniforms that enhance program identity; circulating newsletters and annual reports; and creating brochures, posters, and other program materials for use by affiliates. These functions create a brand name and an identifiable product for national youth-serving organizations that contributes to their credibility.
- *Standard Setting and Assessment.* Setting standards for how programs

should operate is a national-office function that aims to instill a level of consistency in the way programs are run across affiliates. Beyond operational standards, some national offices set quality standards and procedures for self-assessment against them. Some national offices also engage in research concerning program implementation and impacts.

Many of the functions performed for affiliates by national offices are parallel to functions performed by intermediary organizations discussed in subsequent sections of this report.

### **Organizations Serving Young People and Adults**

There are organizations that serve adults as

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well as children and youth—faith-based organizations, adult fraternities and sororities, and a number of public and civic organizations like parks and recreation departments, libraries (a small but growing provider of after-school programs), and museums.

To greater or lesser extents in different cities, such public and civic organizations as parks, libraries, and museums offer substantial resources for young people. These organizations provide support for program development and have an administrative infrastructure, advantages similar to the national youth-serving organizations, and often a dedicated source of public funding.

### **The Diversity of Youth-Serving Organizations and Its Advantages**

The presence and prevalence of each type of youth-serving organization varies widely across cities and neighborhoods within

them. This variety has advantages for the organizations and the youth they serve. The wide array of youth organizations:

- Broadens the choice available to parents and participants. Variations in local organizations offering youth programs often reflect differences in the culture, race/ethnicity, religion, and other traditions of local residents, frequently making them resources parents trust and in which young people feel welcome.
- Allows young people to select among activities that develop and deepen different interests and skills.
- Gives the field the capacity to respond to changes in the availability and demands on families, schools, and other institutions with a stake in young people. This flexibility in response to other supports for young people enables youth-serving organizations to be “gap filling” (Pittman, 1991).
- Enables providers to enter alliances that build on the diversity of what they offer and in the process to learn from each other (Kohm, 1998).

The variety of youth-serving organizations also reflects the reality that a large and increasing number of providers are needed to create sufficient opportunities in out-of-school hours, to offer choice of sponsorship and content, and yet to operate programs at a scale that is personal and supportive (Halpern, in press).

### **Challenges Facing the Youth Development Field and Youth-Serving Organizations**

While the types of organizations that make up the youth development field are varied, they face a number of common challenges. These challenges include the absence of a clear mandate regarding their primary functions; the lack of program standards and substantial variation in program quality; a host of operational impediments related to facilities, staffing, administrative supports, and financing; and the need for identified outcomes and attention to accountability for achieving them. Each of these challenges is



discussed in what follows.

Although the diversity of organizations concerned with youth development is one of the strengths of the field, it also represents a core challenge. Unlike education or health care, two other human service sectors, there is a lack of recognition by the public, policy makers, and many practitioners that youth-serving organizations—despite their differences in size, program content, and approach—are all part of an emerging youth development field.

### **Absence of a Clear Mandate**

Youth-serving organizations sit at the intersection of other institutions with a stake in young people—families, schools, and the business sector, among others. Each of these other institutions has a clearer core set of roles that guide their interactions with young people and for which they are accountable.

There are a variety of purposes addressed by youth-serving organizations as a group and to various degrees by individual organizations. They include provision of safe places, both physically and emotionally; access to ongoing care and attention from adults; venues in which to develop and demonstrate talents and skills; assistance with homework and attention to academic enrichment; exposure to vocational interests and options; and opportunities for leadership and civic contribution.

Yet, in part, because of the heterogeneity of youth-serving organizations and their many offerings, there is lack of clarity about their core roles, responsibilities, boundaries, and standards, and about the degree to which they share a mandate with regard to these things. At the same time, pressures on other institutions have ripple effects on youth-serving organizations. As more parents work or are being required to join the labor force, many families are able to provide less consistent attention and supports for children, leaving a larger range of needs—a larger gap—to which youth-serving organizations seek to respond.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, as standards for schools and students in them are being raised around the country, pressures to raise student achieve-

ment are being brought to bear on youth-serving organizations as well. Increasingly, these organizations are being asked to contribute to raising student achievement test scores and to justify investments in them based on these outcomes.

Although the flexibility and responsiveness of youth programs is beneficial for young people, the absence of clear roles and responsibilities that youth organizations should serve and the outcomes for which

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they are accountable makes the field appear less coherent to the policy and funding community. Absence of a distinct mandate for youth-serving organizations subjects them to both unrealistic expectations and inconsistent support.

### **Programmatic Challenges**

#### **Absence of Standards**

In part because youth-serving organizations have not traditionally viewed themselves as engaged in a common endeavor, there has been no agreement about what constitutes quality programs. This deprives organizations, consumers, funders, and other stakeholders of a target against which to judge their performance.

There are, however, efforts underway to define standards, and consensus is apparently emerging among leaders and experienced providers. Although there is signifi-

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<sup>3</sup> Heath and McLaughlin (1993) find that good youth organizations have characteristics of being family-like, including setting high expectations, providing consistent supports, and creating caring relationships.

cant overlap, these characteristics vary somewhat for after-school programs for younger school-aged children and for programs for adolescents.<sup>4</sup> They include adequate levels of the following:

For younger children:

- staff warmth and flexibility
- literacy to help children with learning support
- understanding children's developmental needs
- staffing to assure individualized attention

*The limited studies of program quality indicate wide variation in after-school programs—in the skills and qualities of their staff, in the activities they offer, and in the welcoming or regimented climate they create.*

- exposure to children's own as well as the broader culture
- healthy snacks
- a predictable environment

There is less agreement about the extent to which children should have choice about their activities and use of their after-school time, including time for unstructured play, and the degree to which after-school programs should be devoted to more structured learning that complements the school curriculum (Halpern, in press).

Networks for Youth Development, a network of community-based youth-serving agencies in partnership with the Youth Development Institute of the Fund for the City of New York has identified a set of best practices for youth development programs.

These practices include:

For Adolescents:

- a holistic approach to young people
- caring and trusting relationships
- high expectations
- engaging activities
- opportunities for contribution
- promoting continuity

Although standards of “good-enough” or “best” practices are beginning to emerge, opportunities for building consensus in relation to them and for further diffusion of them are both necessary.

### **Variability in Program Quality**

There are quality programs in disadvantaged neighborhoods and elsewhere (Heath & McLaughlin, 1993; Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 1995; Merry, in press). Nevertheless, as noted by Halpern, available evidence raises doubts about whether the majority embody the attributes of “good-enough” programs (Halpern, in press).

The limited studies of program quality indicate wide variation in after-school programs—in the skills and qualities of their staff, in the activities they offer, and in the welcoming or regimented climate they create.

In a study of eight inner-city after-school programs in Chicago, Halpern and his colleagues found that most staff did not adequately plan activities, resolve issues with children, or develop strong relationships with them (Halpern, 1990). Evidence about the characteristics and quality of programs for adolescents show similar gaps between the standards and the norm (Halpern, Barker, & Mollard, 1998).<sup>5</sup>

Organizational challenges including constraints related to physical facilities, staffing, administrative supports, and financing can limit the quality of programs and the numbers of young people served in them.

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that these standards tend to reflect the group of programs from which they originated. Program standards for younger children reflect a child care orientation while those for adolescents reflect the developmental skill-building orientation of the traditional youth-serving organizations like the Ys and the Scouts.

<sup>5</sup> Halpern's research is drawn on extensively in discussing challenges facing youth-serving organizations because he has studied the operational realities of both after-school programs serving school-aged children as well as programs serving adolescents.

## **Organizational Challenges**

### ***Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies***

Inadequate facilities limit what many youth-serving organizations can offer. Programs' physical space determines their size and in some cases stability and restricts the activities they can offer (Halpern, in press). Many programs have only short-term leases, and many others rely on shared or borrowed space, making it difficult to appropriately arrange the space for their programs or to invest in physical improvements. In their study of after-school programs, Halpern and colleagues found needs for playground equipment, desks and chairs, science and arts materials, and books (Halpern, 1999).

### **Staffing**

There are substantial challenges facing youth-serving organizations related to the nature, training, and tenure of staff, including limited staff education and training, low salaries and limited benefits, lack of a career ladder, high staff turnover, and substantial reliance on volunteers.

### ***Limited Education and Training***

Staff are often relatively young people who come from the neighborhood in which a program is located and who reflect the race/ethnicity, culture, and lives of program participants. Sometimes they are program participants who have come up through a program assuming increasing responsibility over time. These characteristics can have significant benefits, providing role models for participants, and people whom they can trust and with whom they can identify. Such staff bring an understanding of and respect for young people that is important in the programs themselves and in staff interactions with other institutions like schools.

Although some staff have attended college and returned to serve their community, many frontline youth workers have only a high school degree. Program coordinators and directors have either an associate or a bachelors' degree.

Affiliates of the national youth-serving organizations require somewhat more education than many other youth-serving organizations. A 1996 survey of the affiliates of eight of the national youth-serving organizations found that just over half (56%) of their program directors were required to have a bachelor's degree while 25 percent of youth workers were required to have graduated from college and 30 percent to have had at least some college course work (The National Collaboration for Youth, 1996).<sup>6</sup> However, most staff enter the field without having relevant academic courses or training, and low salaries and limited opportunities for advancement limit staff interest in courses, once they have entered the field (Halpern, in press).

In part because of too few staff resources and lack of training, there is little staff supervision of frontline practice in many youth-serving organizations.

### ***Low Salaries and Limited Benefits***

An analysis of sixty after-school programs by Halpern and associates found that frontline staff earn \$5-\$9 per hour and average \$7, salaries that are very similar to salaries in the child care field. Coordinators and directors earn \$8-\$15 per hour. Group workers and program directors employed full time by affiliated national youth-serving organizations appear to have salaries that fall within the same ranges (The National Collaboration for Youth, 1996).<sup>7</sup>

Frontline staff in most programs (many of whom are part-time workers), receive limited, if any, fringe benefits, although those working for affiliates of national youth-serving organizations have access to more and more substantial benefits. Part-time employees were over half of all staff working in the affiliates surveyed by the National Collaboration for Youth. Fifty-six percent of the organizations employing part-time staff provide some benefits to them. These benefits typically include holiday pay, paid sick leave, and paid vacation on a pro-rated basis. A smaller percentage of national affiliates

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<sup>6</sup> The national organizations surveyed were Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs, Camp Fire, Girls Inc., Girl Scouts, The National Network for Youth, and the YMCA and YWCA. Participating in the survey were 1,050 local affiliates of these organizations.

<sup>7</sup> A caveat on these comparisons is that the National Collaboration for Youth data were collected in 1996 and are reported as an average, full-time annual salary. For purposes of comparison, annual figures were divided by 1,950 hours, based on a 37.5-hour work week.

(40%) also provide health care benefits (The National Collaboration for Youth, 1996). Staff employed by public agencies—schools, park districts, and libraries—tend to have higher hourly wages and greater access to benefits than those working in private, non-profit organizations.

#### ***Lack of a Career Ladder***

Most youth-serving organizations lack a career ladder for advancement. Individuals who wish to stay in the field have two options: to remain frontline workers directly interacting with young people or to take on one of a limited number of managerial and administrative positions. People who want a better salary or more recognition and prestige tend to leave youth work. In addition, the perception that this is a job young people take for short periods of time discredits longer-term investment in the field.

#### ***High Staff Turnover***

The absence of adequate training, supervision, and salaries reinforces turnover among youth workers. Staff turnover is nearly 40 percent or more each year—and quite variable from program to program. As Halpern notes,

Turnover occurs at any time during the year, often without much notice, resulting in what can be vacancies over long periods. This pattern multiplies stress on remaining staff, occasionally throws programs into chaos, and sometimes forces the hiring of people who would not ordinarily be selected (a problem compounded by the fact that new staff frequently get minimal, if any, preparation, and must learn how to do their job while in it) (Halpern, in press).

#### ***Reliance on Volunteers***

A large number of programs use volunteers who can provide more individual attention to children with homework help, tutoring, and other contributions. However, the tenure, training, suitability, and need for supervision of volunteers can be problems. The commitment and tenure of volunteers varies widely as does the screening and support they receive. There are limits on the extent to which the

field can be “grown and strengthened through ‘volunteerism’” (Halpern, in press).

#### ***Administrative Infrastructure***

Many directors of youth-serving organizations have come up through the ranks without training or experience in management practices. Grassroots programs and many small organizations typically lack adequate staff to attend to management and administration, leaving staff with a sense of having to choose between attention to programs and participants in them or to management concerns (Quern & Rauner, 1998). Many youth-serving organizations have inadequate back office operations including record-keeping, finance and accounting systems, or access to assistance on legal or financial matters.

#### ***Financing***

Without a dedicated funding stream, youth-serving organizations often have to patch together multiple sources of funds to keep programs going. As a result, organization budgets can vary from year to year. The search for funding can cause organizations to provide interventions for special populations like foster care at the expense of activities for a broader youth population.

Securing adequate funding can be particularly difficult for small organizations and grassroots programs, most of which do not have access to funding from foundations or United Ways. These sources of funds can be difficult to access because of the required status as an incorporated 501(c)(3), the demands of developing foundation grant requests, and the need to meet reporting requirements.

In a study of sixty after-school programs serving low-income children, Halpern and colleagues found that revenues come from the following sources:

- Parent fees, which can provide more than 80 percent of revenue in programs serving more advantaged children, and from 10 to 25 percent in a sample of programs serving low-income children.
- Public sources of funding, which provide 40 to 50 percent of total revenues. These funds come from child care subsidies (either contracts or

vouchers), providing resources for about 10 percent of low-income children who participate in after-school programs. In addition, these programs are able to draw on some federal sources from the Department of Education, the Department of Justice, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

- United Way, foundation, and corporate grants.
- In-kind contributions—renting space at below-market rates or using it free; paying less than their share of utilities; using volunteers or work-study students.

Many of these programs bridge the gap between revenues and expenses by “the widespread practice of running a deficit” (Halpern, in press).

#### ***Identified Outcomes and Methods of Accountability***

There is as yet no clear set of expectations about the outcomes for young people of participating in youth programs. However, there is recognition of the need and some movement toward identifying and demonstrating outcomes in the youth development field. Some of this momentum was sparked by the United Way’s recent emphasis on measuring outcomes. In addition, several intermediaries in the youth development field have worked on defining outcomes for young people involved in effective programs, and on developing an associated process for the assessment of programs against these outcomes. Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Boys & Girls Clubs have manuals to assist local affiliates in defining and measuring relevant outcomes. Some evaluation research has demonstrated outcomes associated with youth development programs, including, for example, an impact study of Big Brother Big Sisters (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 1995).

However promising, these efforts to define and demonstrate program outcomes have not yet taken hold in routine program monitoring and evaluation practices. Moreover, demonstrations of these outcomes are not yet sufficiently robust to enlist policy makers in recognizing and providing solid support for the youth development field. In

the absence of identified outcomes and accountability for achieving them, youth organizations are increasingly being asked to demonstrate their impact on existing, quantitative measures with policy priority, such as student achievement test scores.

#### **Important Contributions and Compelling Opportunities**

Youth-serving organizations share the aims of contributing to the positive development of young people. In fact, many programs for young people function as engaging and rigorous settings for cognitive and social development. They provide opportunities to participate in activities and issues of importance, involving participants in environments of high expectations and sustained support. These opportunities can contribute to developing competencies critical for individual achievement in both education and employment and for participation in civic life (Health & McLaughlin, 1993; Wynn et al., 1994; Pittman & Wright, 1991; Wynn, in press).

There is a great deal at stake in further raising the profile and performance of youth-serving organizations. Many young people, especially those living in urban, inner-city neighborhoods, lack the personal supports and opportunities needed to build the competencies necessary for a successful transition to adulthood (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1992). And the demands are growing. For the first time, all young people have to develop a mix of complex intellectual and interpersonal competencies in order to find productive employment and to contribute to the functioning of society and of communities within it (Marshall, 1989; Reich, 1991; Resnick, 1987; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). At the same time, they are confronted with increased challenges that often impede learning and development.

The changing structure and diminished stability of families along with patterns of parent employment, translate into fewer, less consistently available resources and supports for children. A greater percentage of young people are living in poverty than any other age group, and they are facing the obstacles to daily life and development that poverty imposes (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1998; Dryfoos, 1990; Hamburg, 1992).

Although the tasks and challenges facing children and the organizations that serve them are great, this is also a time of significant opportunity, particularly for youth-serving organizations. Increased attention to the importance of after-school time is resulting in both more funding for programming and more resulting attention to the quality and impact of what youth-serving organizations provide. There is also growing use of schools as sites in which youth-serving organizations are providing services, supports, and enrichment. These full-service schools, extended

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schools, community schools, and similar arrangements heighten opportunity for and attention to the programs, practices, and resulting benefits of youth-serving organizations (Melaville, 1998; Wynn, Meyer, & Richards-Schuster, forthcoming).

With these enhanced opportunities for youth-serving organizations comes a corresponding need to attend to the programs, practices, and impacts of these organizations and the field of which they are a part. Given the broad array of youth-serving organizations and the different contexts in which they operate, local intermediaries—organizations dedicated to working directly with and for youth

organizations—become particularly important in helping to extend the numbers of young people reached with high-quality programs.

The balance of this report turns to the contribution of local intermediary organizations in building the youth development field and the contributions to young people of the organizations that are part of it.

### **III. LOCAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS**

Local intermediaries have an important role in helping to shape a cohesive vision for the youth development field, in getting “. . . a dialogue going about findings from research and practitioner experience, and how to apply these in difficult situations. And then sticking around to work it through” (Schorr, 1997, p. 54).

Over the last decade, as more attention has focused on the importance of youth-serving organizations in building the competencies young people need for successful transition to adulthood, there has been a corresponding growth in a set of new and emerging local intermediary organizations.

This report focuses exclusively on local intermediary organizations—that is, organizations that work directly with and on behalf of youth-serving organizations in a city or other designated geographic area.<sup>8</sup> At the request of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, we focused on local intermediaries, because they are the closest, most accessible, and consistent resource enabling youth organizations to reach more young people with high quality programs. We use the terms “local youth development intermediary” and simply “intermediary” interchangeably to describe these organizations.<sup>9</sup>

In this section, we discuss the defining characteristics of local intermediary organi-

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<sup>8</sup> Whereas all the intermediaries in this study work with youth-serving organizations, several intermediaries also work with other kinds of organizations, such as community-development corporations and organizations offering employment training programs.

<sup>9</sup> The Academy for Educational Development recently conducted a study of intermediary organizations in the youth development field (Camino, 1998). We have not adopted their term, “capacity-building intermediary organizations,” in part, because there is a difference in pedagogy and practices among intermediaries in this study that suggests differences in the extent to which they work from a capacity-building orientation. This distinction is one to which we return in the discussion of challenges facing youth development intermediaries.

zations in the youth development field, describe the youth-development intermediaries we focused on in this review, and delineate the functions they perform.

### Defining Characteristics

Local youth development intermediaries operate in a position between the youth-serving organizations they assist and a body of knowledge, skills, contacts, and other resources. They take a deliberate position as brokers and facilitators, functioning both as representatives and agents of change.

Local intermediaries work directly with youth-serving organizations to build their capacity to serve more young people and to serve them better. They help to increase the number and variety of programs for young people, and to expand and enhance the quality of existing programs and the competency of the organizations that provide them.

The assistance intermediaries provide includes helping to define common desirable outcomes for youth participants, identifying best program practices that contribute to these outcomes, and articulating an associated set of necessary staff competencies. Beyond standard setting, intermediaries often develop such materials as training curricula and processes for assessment against them. In most cases, intermediaries see staff development and the provision of staff training as a core strategy for contributing to the field. Intermediaries provide training directly, enter alliances with colleges and local training organizations to create training opportunities, and refer youth organizations to existing sources of training and technical assistance.

Local youth development intermediaries serve as brokers for increased interactions among youth-serving organizations and other institutions with a stake in young people, among them schools, health care providers, and more traditional, treatment-oriented social service agencies.

Local intermediaries also work across individual youth-serving organizations in order to enhance their collective recognition, functioning, and effectiveness as a field. In this role, intermediaries represent the capacities, contributions, and needs of youth-serving organizations and seek to gain the recognition and support of legislators, other policy makers, government agencies, private fun-

ders, and others that programs need to effectively serve young people at a scale and quality necessary to make a difference.

There is a tension in the practices used by youth development intermediaries that lies in the extent to which the intermediary sees itself as transforming the field by imposing knowledge and skills as opposed to supporting change as coming from within the organizations with which it works. This tension is

*The assistance intermediaries provide includes helping to define common desirable outcomes for youth participants, identifying best program practices that contribute to these outcomes, and articulating an associated set of necessary staff competencies.*

played out differently among the intermediary organizations we spoke with as part of this study and it is a tension to which we return in the discussion of challenges facing youth development intermediaries.

### The Sample of Local Intermediary Organizations

The seven organizations studied as part of this reconnaissance represent a purposive sample. They were selected based on their standing as well-known among the funding community and among their peers. The organizations are:

- The Youth Development Institute of the Fund for the City of New York
- Community Network for Youth Development—San Francisco, CA
- YouthNet, Kansas City—Kansas City, MO
- The Chicago Youth Agency Partnership
- Community Partners—Los Angeles, CA
- Pinellas County Juvenile Welfare Board—Pinellas County, FL
- The Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board

Each of these organizations was chosen for particular characteristics. The first four are intermediaries that work exclusively with organizations serving young people, and they represent a mix of longevity. Among them, the Youth Development Institute (YDI) was included as one of, if not the, most mature and well-established intermediary in the youth development field.<sup>10</sup> The Community

routine source of funding than that available to private nonprofit intermediaries. These organizations act as funders or policy bodies and as such can directly affect youth-serving organizations. The issue of how intermediary organizations are structured and positioned is discussed in the section on challenges facing the operation and effectiveness of intermediaries.

The sample includes intermediaries that are independent nonprofit organizations, divisions of larger nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. Some serve only youth organizations and others serve a wider group. They are diverse in terms of geographic location, size, age, and other characteristics described more fully in the following section.

Although this sample is not representative of all local intermediaries working with youth-serving organizations, the cross-section of characteristics including maturity and ways of working may illuminate the kinds of challenges faced by more and less well-established intermediary organizations and intermediaries with different structures and missions, and operating under various auspices.

Because of the limited and highly selective sample of organizations included in this review, the findings should be understood as more suggestive than exhaustive. In assessing what we have learned from these organizations, we have looked both for the range of their responses, for example, on the nature of the functions intermediaries perform, as well as for possible convergence in their views, for example, on the nature of challenges facing intermediaries and possible strategies for addressing them.

## Methods

In preparing this report, we have reviewed existing literature to identify studies on the role of intermediaries serving youth development organizations. This literature is referenced in Appendix A. We have conducted telephone and in-person interviews with the directors or staff of the intermediary organizations, and have reviewed relevant material written by or about each of the interme-

*There is a tension in the practices used by youth development intermediaries that lies in the extent to which the intermediary sees itself as transforming the field by imposing knowledge and skills as opposed to supporting change as coming from within the organizations with which it works.*

Network for Youth Development (CNYD) and YouthNet (YN) are less mature but nevertheless well-established organizations, and Chicago Youth Agency Partnership (CYAP) is a younger, more fledgling intermediary. This mix of longevity was intended to shed light on the kinds of challenges that are shared across intermediaries regardless of age as well as some that may be more particular to the status and stability of a particular intermediary.

Community Partners (CP) differs from the others in that it began and continues to be principally an organization committed to building the capacity of individuals and organizations to contribute to strengthening Los Angeles and other communities in Southern California. CP's attention to youth-serving organizations and to furthering youth development principles and practices is an aspect of its larger agenda.

The sample includes two government organizations that provide forms of intermediary assistance to youth-serving organizations. In consultation with Clark Foundation staff, these organizations were included in part because they have a steadier and more

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<sup>10</sup> As the most mature of these local intermediary organizations, YDI was the subject of more intensive interviews and is drawn on more extensively in examples in this report. In addition to Michele Cahill, Mary McCormick, Richard Murphy, and Constancia Warren provided perspectives on YDI's work and its role.



diaries. These documents include program proposals and progress reports, brochures, annual reports, and other materials developed by the intermediaries themselves, and in two cases, external evaluation reports. In addition, we interviewed selected individuals knowledgeable about local intermediary organizations including funders, evaluators working in initiatives in which intermediaries have a role, and people informed about capacity building in other sectors. The list of interviews conducted is included in Appendix B.

### **The Intermediary Organizations and Their Functions**

In what follows, we briefly describe each of the intermediary organizations we studied. These intermediaries operate under significantly different mandates and auspices. The descriptions highlight their roles and the different ways in which they operate. Table I offers basic descriptive information, including the area they serve, their age, staffing, budget, source of funds, and comments on their status as private or public entities and on other aspects of their structure.

The functions performed by local intermediaries, including the seven drawn on in this study, are:

- *Convening and Networking*—creating forums for peer networking and professional exchange among practitioners, policy makers, funders, and other stakeholders
- *Knowledge Development and Dissemination*—helping shape a vision and framework that defines the field; developing assessment tools, training curricula, and other materials, and making them broadly available; and brokering access to resources, including funding, technical assistance, and training
- *Standards Identification and Setting*—working with youth organizations to identify best practices, relevant staff competencies, and resulting outcomes for youth
- *Training*—locating and creating training programs, developing training consortia, providing training

directly, and referring organizations to sources of existing training

- *Management Assistance*—performing such management functions as payroll, accounting, and legal assistance; providing information on funding, and raising and re-granting funds for designated purposes; providing organizational development assistance on topics including board development, financial and facilities management, and information technology
- *Advocacy and Representation*—representing the contributions and needs of the field to government, private funders, and others on issues including funding, policy formation, and legislation
- *Accountability*—helping develop assessment guides and monitoring processes; participating in program documentation, providing evaluation oversight and management

These functions are reflected in descriptions of each of the seven intermediaries that follow.

### **The Youth Development Institute of the Fund for the City of New York**

Begun as an incubator project within the Fund for the City of New York, The Youth Development Institute (YDI) is now a program arm of the Fund. YDI views its role as identifying and pursuing opportunities to build the field of youth development by working with and through the field itself. A core of YDI's role involves working with youth organizations to improve their program and management practices and, as a result, their benefits for young people. YDI seeks to strengthen the youth development field both horizontally among practitioners, and vertically among legislative leaders, funders, and others and to work both at and across these levels. It works with youth-serving organizations, those traditionally devoted to building youth competencies and those that traditionally have taken a deficit or problem orientation; with funders; government legislators and executive departments; researchers and evaluators, and other potential contributors to a field-building strat-

**TABLE I**

## Characteristics of Seven Local Youth Development Intermediaries

Intermediary	Area Served	Founded*	Staff Size (in FTEs)*	Annual Budget#	Major Funding Sources	Comments
Youth Development Institute, Fund for the City of New York	New York City, NY primarily; also manages Beacons national adaptation	1991	12.5 plus interns and consultants	\$3,800,000	Private foundations	Program arm of the Fund for the City of New York, an operating foundation
Community Partners	Southern CA	1992	15	\$6,700,000	Fees for service Private foundations	Private agency
Chicago Youth Agency Partnership	Chicago, IL	1994	2.5 plus consultants	\$300,000	Private foundations Membership dues	Membership organization
YouthNet of Greater Kansas City	Kansas City metropolitan area	1992	6	\$1,033,000	Private foundations Local government	Private agency
Community Network for Youth Development	San Francisco Bay area, CA	1992	10	\$2,083,330	Private foundations	Private agency
Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board	Minneapolis, MN	1985	31	\$10,000,000	Local government	Inter-governmental agency
Pinellas County Juvenile Welfare Board	Pinellas County, FL	1945	55	\$31,686,000	Local government	Government agency

\* Alternatively, date the organization commenced intermediary functions (if different than formation date).

+ FTEs : Full Time Equivalents (total daily paid staff hours/8 hours = # of FTE)

# Budget amounts for FY 2000 include passed through and regranted funds. Percentages of these funds range from none to less than 5 percent for the three intermediaries with the smallest budgets to 60 percent to 90 percent for the remaining intermediaries.

egy. YDI takes a multidimensional approach, which is exemplified in two endeavors, Networks for Youth Development and the Beacons Initiative, both of which it has helped to launch and support.

Networks for Youth Development is a group of fifteen established youth-serving organizations in New York City convened by YDI. The organizations participating in Networks were selected by YDI from respondents to an RFP. In addition to diverse backgrounds (recreation, child welfare, community development), organizations were selected, in part, because they were members of other associations, like

United Neighborhood Houses, and thus able to transmit the standards and methods developed through Networks.

As part of Networks, partner organizations committed to the participation of a minimum of five staff at different levels, including the executive director, program managers, and line staff. Each staff member served on a working committee, including committees devoted to (1) identifying outcomes for youth participants, (2) defining program practices needed to reach these outcomes, (3) establishing associated youth worker competencies, and (4) specifying organizational supports—the management structures and practices needed to achieve

these outcomes. YDI staffed these committees, helping to inform and facilitate their work. As a product of this work, the standards and practices distilled in committees were incorporated in guides written for and distributed widely to the field. (YDI has distributed over 10,000 of these small, spiral-bound guides nationally and abroad.) Based on these standards, staff from Network agencies participated in youth development training. At least two staff from each agency also participated in training-of-trainers. Subsequently these trainers co-trained with YDI staff in their organizations and were members of peer-assessment teams across Network organizations. Ultimately, each member organization committed to conducting an outcome evaluation in conjunction with YDI. The intent in forming Networks was to build an ongoing culture of inquiry, assessment, and reflection within and across organizations in the field. Through their membership in other associations, Network agencies are in a position to disseminate the standards, principles, and practices they have identified.

YDI's work with the Beacons Initiative exemplifies its aim of creating policy through work at the level of practice. Sponsored and overseen by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, Beacons are year-round, school-based community centers led by community-based organizations. Begun in 1991, eighty Beacons now provide developmental opportunities and problem-solving services for children, families, and other residents, and serve as vehicles for community organization and development.

YDI has provided assistance to the Beacons Initiative since its inception, working with the city to help frame the initial conception of the Beacons. It facilitates monthly day-long cross-site meetings of Beacons directors and staff as a forum for clarifying youth development principles and ways of embedding them in program practices. YDI staff work on-site at Beacon centers providing technical assistance and consultation on program issues (like providing opportunities for youth leadership and outreach to parents), and on management challenges (like managing Beacon's relationships with host schools).

As part of management assistance for Beacon's agencies and other youth-serving organizations, the Fund and YDI offered

training on such management functions as strategic planning, board development, fundraising, and personnel practices. YDI raises and regrants substantial foundation funds to engage Beacons in enhancing program quality, for example, by providing thematically-based literacy activities in their after-school programs. YDI was responsible for documenting the Beacons and describing progress and obstacles encountered in implementation. This role enabled YDI to continue to inform the vision for the Beacons and to call attention to challenges facing the field in its realization. YDI helps coordinate and host national and international policy makers, funders, practitioners, and researchers interested in the Beacons. The founding director has participated in policy forums on the role of

*From YDI's perspective, an initiative with the purposes and scale of the Beacons was critical to field building, providing something that a large number of youth development organizations were doing simultaneously, bringing both the vision and the gaps into high relief, and at a scale sufficient to have an impact on public policy.*

schools and youth agencies in contributing to youth and community development. In addition to attending White House meetings, she worked with executive agency staff helping to inform federal policy.

From YDI's perspective, an initiative with the purposes and scale of the Beacons was critical to field building, providing something that a large number of youth development organizations were doing simultaneously, bringing both the vision and the gaps into high relief, and at a scale sufficient to have an impact on public policy.

### **Community Network for Youth Development**

The Community Network for Youth Development (CNYD) is a private, nonprofit organization serving the San Francisco Bay Area. Founded in 1992 to provide professional development training for youth workers, CNYD took on its more expansive intermediary role in 1994 when it incorporated

and amplified its mission to strengthen the field of youth development more broadly. CNYD now has a staff of ten and a \$2 million annual budget.

Although independent youth-serving organizations are CNYD's principal constituency, it also works with a broad range of local affiliates of national youth-serving organizations. CNYD has found that local affiliates want intensive and ongoing support that complements what their national offices provide but that is not available through them. CNYD has also become deeply involved in work with large public systems serving youth, such as parks and recreation departments, libraries, and schools. An outgrowth of CNYD's work with public agencies is an increasing role as policy advisor to local and state officials seeking to support youth and youth-serving organizations through legislation. In all cases, CNYD's expertise is focused on the mission of increasing the quantity of high-quality youth development programs.

Like Networks for Youth Development created by YDI, Youth Development Learning Networks are one strategy by which CNYD addresses its mission. CNYD recruits staff from area youth-serving organizations to participate in 4-month learning sessions with groups of peers from similar agencies. The Learning Network sessions follow a Youth Development Framework for Practice developed by CNYD in concert with researchers Michelle Gambone and James Connell. The focus is on quality youth development practices: what they are, how they can be incorporated in programs, and how their impacts can be evaluated. CNYD brings knowledge of youth development principals and best practices as they are identified in the academic literature and implemented in other programs nationally. Participants bring a detailed understanding of the possibilities, constraints, and demands facing them in their particular program settings. The CNYD-facilitated discussions are intended to bridge the gap between theory and practice, contributing to participant knowledge and skills and embedding the improved understanding of youth development practices within local programs.

At the beginning and end of the 4-month Learning Network cycle, funders and policy makers join agency executive directors and

youth workers in Network meetings, which are designed to focus on the opportunities and obstacles common across programs and to inform thinking about useful strategies for addressing systemic constraints. CNYD assists in moving the learning process from discussion into programs by accompanying Learning Network participants back to their agencies and providing up to 20 hours of on-site coaching to institutionalize the Network experience in improved practice. Finally, CNYD helps agencies develop self-assessment techniques so that quality practices can be maintained through local agency processes of assessment and program improvement.

Another major activity of CNYD is its work as a coordinating intermediary for the San Francisco Beacons Initiative. An adaptation of the New York Beacons Initiative (see YDI), CNYD provides Beacons support that focuses on building capacity at three levels: at the site level (e.g., helping Beacon Centers to improve their practice, management, and organizational structures), at the initiative level (e.g., supporting the steering committee, developing funding sources, and managing the evaluation), and at the level of all stakeholders (e.g., convening meetings, facilitating other forms of exchange, and assisting in incorporating evaluation findings into ongoing work).

Although CNYD does not directly provide organizational development and management assistance, it does work with agencies around organizational development issues, in part by focusing on the linkages between quality youth programming and organizational structures and practices. CNYD's focus follows from its assessment that the Bay Area community of organizational development consultants provides an array of traditional management assistance and that local funders understand and adequately support organizations in need of such assistance.

### **YouthNet, Kansas City**

YouthNet is a private nonprofit organization with a staff of six. Founded in 1988, its \$1 million budget is funded by private foundations and local government. YouthNet seeks to serve parents and children by working with youth-serving organizations including national affiliates, large free-standing organizations, and small neighborhood-based programs. Looking toward a long-term goal

of securing stable and adequate public financing for youth-serving organizations, YouthNet focuses on a near-term strategy of building a high-quality and accountable youth-serving sector able to assure the public that its tax dollars will be well spent.

Alone among the intermediaries profiled in this report, YouthNet sees its primary accountability as being directly to parents and young people. YouthNet is beginning a process designed to set standards for quality programs and mechanisms for monitoring against them. In this process, YouthNet expects to hear from parents and young people about what characteristics they want programs to have, from agency personnel about their views of quality programs and the barriers they face, and from the funding community. In setting standards, YouthNet may use or adapt existing guidelines, such as those for school age child care, as a basis for its own.

Although standard setting is the first part of a process for enhancing youth programs, this will be followed by discussions about how to structure fair and consistent monitoring processes. YouthNet sees assessment and monitoring as a multi-step process, including program self-assessment, then peer assessment, and finally, unannounced drop-in visits. An important aim is to use standards and monitoring against them as a context for a more focused and forthright conversation among providers and funders about what the constraints are in meeting standards and what resources are realistically needed to meet them.

A core of YouthNet's current efforts is aimed at developing a system to support youth worker training. YouthNet has worked with the local community college system to develop a for-credit, classroom-based training program. In addition, YouthNet provides in-service youth worker training. Overall, about 600 frontline youth workers have participated in YouthNet training. Understanding that quality programming requires a full complement of trained staff at all levels, YouthNet is working to develop standards and expand training opportunities for board members, executive leadership, and middle managers.

As it monitors a broad cross-section of agencies against program standards, YouthNet expects the monitoring process to surface policy-level and strategic issues facing youth

organizations as a field. It plans to raise these issues with its board and the broader community as part of its charge of improving youth services.

### **Chicago Youth Agency Partnership**

The Chicago Youth Agency Partnership (CYAP) was founded in 1994, and—with less than three full-time staff—CYAP is a relatively young and small organization that is developing its specific intermediary roles at the same time that it builds its own organizational systems. Its organizational development activities include developing its board, securing funding, and incorporating as a 501(c)(3). CYAP is a membership organization whose twenty-five members are primarily youth-serving organizations and a number of colleges. Its members include the Girl Scouts and the YMCA, a mix of large and smaller freestanding youth organizations, and local colleges. These connections further CYAP's core youth development goals, which cluster around advocating for an asset-based approach to serving young people, youth worker training, and research and evaluation.

Training activities have included working with a local university to develop a youth worker bachelor's degree program as well as training for staff already employed in a range of agencies. Training efforts have involved both the development of new youth development curricular materials (e.g., the youth worker BA program) as well as introducing curricula developed by other, often national, youth development intermediaries. In its own training sessions, CYAP convenes youth workers from various agencies, allowing cross-organizational learning and building practitioner relationships that support the processes of youth development information exchange and dissemination. CYAP hosts periodic forums focusing on issues like the tobacco settlement or presenting speakers like Lee Schorr, whose work is of interest to youth-serving organizations.

In terms of research and evaluation, CYAP is sponsoring Youth Mapping, a process in which young people are developing data about available youth programs and other resources in local neighborhoods. Youth Mapping is designed to provide an important role and voice for young people, to produce data on available neighborhood resources and services for youth, and to illu-

minate gaps in what is currently available. CYAP and the City of Chicago are partners in the youth mapping process, with six pilot sites last year and twenty sites and 230 young people involved this year. The aim is to make this information accessible to youth through a phone line to be run by the city that young people can call who are interested in finding activities, services, or other kinds of supports.

CYAP also offers consulting assistance to Chicago YouthNets, a city initiative operated by youth-serving organizations that opens schools and other neighborhood facilities for programming for children and families.<sup>11</sup> In a similar fashion, CYAP consults directly with member organizations.

### **Community Partners**

Community Partners (CP) is a private nonprofit organization serving southern California since 1992. Unique among the intermediaries profiled in this report, Community Partners raises more than 90 percent of its core budget through management services fees charged to the agencies in its nonprofit incubator program.

CP's incubator program works to build and strengthen organizational structures around individuals, groups, or existing organizations with good ideas. Community Partners acts as a fiscal agent and provides comprehensive assistance to fledgling organizations, including general administrative and financial services (e.g., accounting and yearly audits), organizational development (e.g., addressing governance issues and developing strategic approaches to fund raising), and program planning (e.g., consulting with individual agencies and group training sessions). There are currently over 130 projects in the nonprofit incubator, twenty of which serve young people.

Community Partners also plays a role as project manager, coordinator, and technical assistance provider in large-scale foundation-led initiatives, of which the Youth Development Resource Project (YDRP) was the first. YDRP, funded by The James Irvine Foundation, represents Community Partners' primary focus on youth-serving organizations. The Irvine Foundation felt that its significant con-

tributions to youth-serving organizations had achieved limited results due to the weak organizational systems of the grantee agencies. Moreover, although many youth-serving organizations often made extensive use of consultants, few consultants had experience with the particular problems endemic to nonprofit, youth-serving agencies.

YDRP involves ten national youth-serving organizations over a period of 4 years. Each organization received a grant of \$100,000, which it could use, in part, to hire independent sources of technical assistance. Each organization also works with Community Partners. CP's role includes building more effective organizational systems, providing program implementation assistance, and helping build a pool of consultants needed to assist youth-serving organizations.

The program focuses on improvement in eight management areas: planning and evaluation; fund development; administration and financial management; human resources and staff development; legal compliance and insurance; technology; facilities management; and governance. Management improvement is pursued as part of a comprehensive strategy to achieve specific organizational goals. For example, if the goal is to increase the number of youth served, Community Partners helps an agency understand the interrelated nature of programmatic and organizational goals and works with them to develop a comprehensive approach to reaching and serving additional youth.

In addition to building organizational systems for each participating agency, Community Partners brings together the executive directors of the participating YDRP agencies for monthly meetings. Between meetings, participants work on implementation so that when they reconvene they can share experiences and troubleshoot in the broader learning context provided by the YDRP participant group.

As part of its youth development work, Community Partners has taken on a more extensive convening role, helping to bring constituencies together to address complex goals and providing staff assistance through the process. In one example, CP convened a

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<sup>11</sup> The Chicago initiative shares the same name as the Kansas City intermediary, although there is no other relationship between them.

roundtable of key government and private youth development actors. The roundtable provides a setting for interagency communication and coordination and continues with United Way support.

### **Pinellas County Juvenile Welfare Board**

The Pinellas County Juvenile Welfare Board (JWB) is an independent taxing district established in 1945 to oversee expenditure of public funds earmarked to benefit young people in Pinellas County, Florida. These funds are a percentage of county real estate taxes, set currently at just under 1 percent. Annually JWB funds agencies serving youth in the thirty-two municipalities within Pinellas County, including the cities of St. Petersburg, Clearwater, Largo, Seminole, and others.

JWB works with roughly eighty agencies that provide programs for youth. Funding is awarded annually through a competitive RFP process for new and expanded programs in areas established in the Board's strategic plan. These areas are violence prevention, substance abuse prevention, and responsible sexuality. In addition, the Board annually provides funding for equipment and renovation that supports investments in organizations' physical infrastructure.

A division of JWB engages in a train-the-trainers effort. Trainers then work directly with youth workers in the agencies receiving funding through the Board. JWB is one of the sites receiving support through the BEST Initiative designed to build an infrastructure to strengthen and support community-based systems of youth worker training.<sup>12</sup>

In cooperation with United Way and the Department of Children and Families, JWB is developing a web page and Internet-accessible system in which agencies can submit budget information as well as tracking data on client use of services.

JWB is the operating entity responsible for overseeing a community-based initiative, Community Change for Youth Development (CCYD), designed to enhance resources for youth. In this initiative spearheaded by Public/Private Ventures, JWB is hiring staff

and overseeing operation of the CCYD in St. Petersburg.

JWB's Research and Evaluation Division produces periodic social indicators reports and a community profile on the status of children and youth in Pinellas County. These data are used in forming the strategic plan on which JWB's grantmaking priorities are based.

Other JWB activities include sponsoring "community councils" that identify and respond to local community issues of concern to children and families; coordinating a program pairing youth 10 to 14 years of age with adults to work on community projects; maintaining a public library with an extensive collection of youth development material; offering numerous low-cost workshops on a wide variety of youth development topics; and providing expert speakers to community groups to address issues such as raising children, community supports for children and families, and understanding the legislative process.

### **Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board**

The Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board (YCB) is an intergovernmental organization that seeks to promote the development of young people in Minneapolis through convening, goal setting, and action. The YCB was established in 1985 through a state-authorized joint powers agreement between the City of Minneapolis, the School District, the Park and Recreation and Library Boards, and the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners. The YCB is governed by a thirteen-member board of elected officials including the Mayor, representatives of each of the member departments, and other government entities.

With a staff of thirty-one and a \$10 million annual budget, the board oversees a mission to "... promote the healthy, comprehensive development of Minneapolis children and youth . . ." (YCB, website). Unlike other intermediaries in this study, the YCB interacts with youth-serving organizations that happen to be part of the initiatives being sponsored by YCB; it does not work

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<sup>12</sup> In addition to the Juvenile Welfare Board, the Youth Development Institute, the Chicago Youth Agency Partnership, and YouthNet are also working on the development of systems to support youth worker training through BEST, an initiative of the Dewitt-Wallace Reader's Digest Fund.

to enhance the capacity or functioning of youth-serving organizations as an independent goal.

The MYCB's activities fall within five functional areas: convening, organizing, project development, fiscal agency and management, and information provision.

Because the MYCB's governance structure brings together actors with influence over significant political, institutional, and monetary resources, it is in a uniquely powerful position as a convener and organizer. When important issues emerge, the MYCB plays a convening role by assuring participation from a diverse group of stakeholders, including people often excluded from key decision-making settings (e.g., smaller community organizations, parents, youth).

Once general goals have been identified, the MYCB works to organize the specific set of resources needed for their realization. This involves giving broad goals specific form, mapping out discrete implementation roles and responsibilities, locating individual and institutional actors to fulfill them, and then convening the actors and helping them move toward realizing the goal.

The MYCB takes on a development role when no other institutions (government, private agency, or corporate) are available to oversee the concrete activities of developing a programmatic response. The Way to Grow, a school readiness initiative, offers an example. Way to Grow places family resource workers in neighborhoods to locate pregnant mothers and families with young children, helping them connect with local resources. Family Resource Centers developed under MYCB auspices are an example of one such resource, providing Head Start and children's health services. A separate Way to Grow management board operates under the authority of the MYCB, which approves Way to Grow's budget and board membership.

In the case of the What's Up youth information line, the MYCB has taken a more hands-on management approach, acting as a youth activities information clearinghouse connecting youth to youth programs. The MYCB also uses this service to identify needed resources by paying attention to where requests reveal programmatic gaps.

Other MYCB collaborative initiatives include working with the Mayor's office, the

public schools, and the Parks and Recreation Department to develop "Phat Summer," providing summer school- and park-based activities to youth aged 12–18. In the Work Hard/Achieve More (WHAM) program, the YCB partnered with the Youth Trust to facilitate successful school to work (and/or post-secondary education) transitions. In addition, the YCB has helped to coordinate, develop, and evaluate various after school athletic and enrichment programs for middle school aged youth.

#### **IV. CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE ROLE OF INTERMEDIARIES**

It's easy. . .to set up intermediaries, but if you don't have the right demand and the right commitment to it locally and the right leadership, it's just another organization.

*Comment of an Observer*

This section focuses on challenges raised by directors of intermediaries and observers of them that are central to intermediaries' current and potential contributions to the youth development field. Like those facing youth-serving organizations, challenges confronting intermediaries are both programmatic and organizational.

Given intermediaries' goals—enhancing recognition of the youth development field and building the capacity of organizations in it—programmatic challenges arise from tensions between these goals and the practices intermediaries use to achieve them. The programmatic challenges relating to the practices used by intermediaries determine the extent to which they are likely to successfully engage youth-serving organizations and other constituents in the work required to build the capacity and effectiveness of the field.

Organizational challenges include problems in the structure, staffing, funding, and leadership of intermediaries that are likely to compromise their functioning and sustainability. These challenges speak to how robust and well-positioned intermediaries are to pursue their programmatic goals.

We focus on the challenges facing intermediaries in order to inform thinking about strategies that can strengthen intermediaries' programmatic practices and their ability as



organizations to pursue them. Table II summarizes these challenges.

### Programmatic Challenges

How an intermediary positions itself in terms of its orientation toward the assistance it provides, its accountability, and the outcomes or net added value for which it is responsible are among the programmatic challenges intermediaries face. These challenges are interrelated, with the status of one having implications for others. Together these challenges appear to be central to the role and relationship intermediaries have with the organizations they serve and to their effectiveness.

### Orientation Toward Assistance

Intermediaries are not information- and value-neutral; they bring with them both knowledge and a viewpoint on which their assistance is based. This viewpoint is based on assumptions about where knowledge rests and on the relative weight given to the interests and priorities of the providers and of the intermediary themselves. These assumptions are reflected, on the one hand, in a more grounded respect for field expertise and a capacity-building approach that informs the way in which assistance is offered and, on the other, by a more externally driven, didactic approach.

In *Building Capacity: A Review of Technical Assistance Strategies*, Wahl, Cahill, and Fruchter describe technical assistance strategies used over the last century. In their analysis of assistance approaches, the authors define capacity as “. . . the development of knowledge, skills, connections, self-reflection, and power to carry out planned change efforts at the ‘local’ level, where change is targeted” (Wahl, Cahill, & Fruchter, 1998, p. 2). They see capacity building as “an approach that distributes power horizontally (rather than vertically)” through “the formation of networks among those with common purposes or common affiliations” (Wahl, Cahill, & Fruchter, 1998, p. 21). From a capacity-building orientation, technical assistance is seen at its core as a collective activity designed to stimulate open-ended inquiry and create a “community of inquiry that supports ongoing development” (EDC, 1992, pp. 2-3).

This capacity-building orientation is illustrated in the approach taken to its role

and relationship with youth-serving organizations by the Youth Development Institute.

As Michele Cahill sees it, effective intermediaries need to recognize and reinforce local expertise, and engage in intensive, two-way interaction and learning that both acknowledges and builds leadership within the field, while also bringing to bear research and knowledge from external sources.

We raise the distinction between a capacity-building approach and a didactic, externally driven orientation because it captures a fundamental tension cited by intermediaries and observers alike: to be effective in securing the engagement of organizations

*Effective intermediaries need to recognize and reinforce local expertise, and engage in intensive, two-way interaction and learning that both acknowledges and builds leadership within the field, while also bringing to bear research and knowledge from external sources.*

and in improving the quantity and quality of what they provide requires a capacity-building orientation.

Although there appears to be substantial recognition of the importance of a capacity-building approach, it is not clear how well-understood the strategies and practices are that embody that approach or how deep or widespread their use is among intermediaries.

### Responsiveness and Accountability

Several observers cited the costs of engaging with an intermediary from the perspective of a youth-serving organization. Youth-serving organizations have to invest staff, time, and attention in using the assistance being offered. These investments represent opportunity costs at the very least, and given the day-to-day demands of running youth programs, organizations will not willingly work with intermediaries if they are not perceived to be responding to their interests and needs.

To attract youth-serving organizations and to engage with them in building their capacity—their role, reach, and effectiveness—requires that intermediaries be sensi-

**Table II**

Local Intermediary Challenges
<b>Programmatic Challenges</b>
<b>Orientation Toward Assistance</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The relative weight given to the knowledge and priorities of the intermediary itself or of the organizations with which it works.</li> <li>• A more grounded respect for field expertise and a capacity-building approach vs. a more externally driven, didactic approach.</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which an intermediary is answerable to the interests and agenda of organizations in the field, to its own funders, or to other stakeholders.</li> </ul>
<b>Role Tensions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether an intermediary can be involved both in grantmaking and capacity building and in standard setting and monitoring.</li> <li>• Skirting competition with providers for funding and credit for achievements.</li> <li>• Avoiding gatekeeping: inhibiting providers' direct communication and contact with key actors, e.g., funders, policy makers.</li> </ul>
<b>Defining and Demonstrating Outcomes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying intermediary outcomes—the net value they add to youth organizations—and developing ways to demonstrate these effects.</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational Challenges</b>
<b>Structure</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessing the benefits and constraints of alternative structures, e.g., operating as a government agency or as a membership organization.</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtaining a dependable source of ongoing funding.</li> <li>• Securing core operating support.</li> <li>• Covering overhead costs.</li> </ul>
<b>Staffing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding and keeping staff who need to have a complex mix of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes.</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting and supporting effective leadership and steering intermediaries through leadership transitions.</li> </ul>

tive and responsive to the organizations they are serving. An intermediary's priorities, approaches, and agenda needs to reflect the preferences of the provider organizations in the field or at least to be negotiated in ways that secure the understanding and ultimately the buy-in of these organizations.

To be effective, an intermediary needs to earn and hold the trust of the organizations with which it works. According to Michele Cahill:

It is critical to find strategies for working with youth-serving organizations so that there is genuine buy-in to the process and ownership of the products that result. Field-building won't occur if the process or content are perceived as imposed as they often are by government, foundations, and the United Way. These interactions have to be "genuine," from the perspective, and "in the voice" of the organizations themselves.

How this responsiveness plays out in practice is far from simple. It does not mean that an intermediary's vision and work is entirely field driven. According to Cahill, "For assistance to really take hold, there have to be arrows going every which way so that leadership is coming from the practitioners and from the young people, it's also coming from us [YDI], participation is coming from everybody, and also expertise, and that includes us as well." What responsiveness to the field looks like in practice, whether and what it means that intermediaries should monitor and measure, is discussed in the section on Outcomes and Net Added Value.

Although an intermediary's primary accountability is, or ideally should be, to the organizations being served, an intermediary is accountable to other stakeholders as well. For one, an intermediary is accountable to its funders. In the best case, an intermediary will have secured support for field-building goals that are consistent with those of the youth organizations being served, and thus assured correspondence between what the field and the funders hold them accountable for achieving. Thus an intermediary is accountable in two directions. It has to accurately judge what aspects of programmatic or organizational improvement the field needs and is willing and able to absorb. It also has to work with a funder to assure that it understands the importance, likely pace, and resources necessary to pursue these goals.

Particularly when intermediaries are providing assistance to youth-serving organizations as part of a major publicly or foundation-sponsored initiative, there is also an implicit accountability to the initiative funder. This is a situation faced by YDI in the Beacons Initiative and CYAP in the Youth-Net Initiative in Chicago. In New York, the Division of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) sponsors and funds the Beacons programs, not YDI. Beacons is a city program implemented by community-based organizations. Thus YDI has obligations and relationships with both the government sponsors and the organizations implementing the program. As Constanica Warren, lead evaluator of the Beacons Initiative, points out:

YDI's accountability to DYCD is not explicit and if DYCD were to be

unreasonable YDI would have no problem in sort of shrugging it's shoulders and saying "that's your problem." But . . . in order to have that be a marriage that works, there needs to be some acknowledgment of the City's priorities in funding those programs. The intermediary can't take them off in another direction.

### Role Tensions

There are two sets of role tensions for intermediary organizations. Both of these tensions are related to the core issue of accountability. One cluster concerns role compatibility—whether, when, or how an intermediary can effectively perform roles both as a grantmaker and capacity builder or be involved simultaneously both in standards setting and monitoring performance against those standards.

A second cluster of issues concerns an intermediary's position between the organizations it serves and external stakeholders

*An intermediary is accountable in two directions. It has to accurately judge what aspects of programmatic or organizational improvement the field needs and is willing and able to absorb. It also has to work with a funder to assure that it understands the importance, likely pace, and resources necessary to pursue these goals.*

who can affect the fortunes and futures both of the intermediary and the field it represents, particularly with regard to funding, credit, gatekeeping, and reporting.

Both sets of tensions concern how much power, status, resources, and autonomy each of the parties has in relation to the other (Wahl, Cahill, & Fruchter, 1998).

#### **Grantmaking and capacity building.**

Some observers and several intermediaries suggested that an intermediary should not be a grantmaker. If a youth-serving organization is funded by an intermediary from which it also seeks programmatic or organizational assistance, being beholden to an intermediary for funding can blunt the openness with

which an organization can admit frailty and be frank about the assistance it needs.

This tension arises when an intermediary is a principal funder, that is, when a government agency or foundation directly acts as an intermediary and may also exist when a free-standing intermediary regrants significant sources of funds. Determining under what circumstances a funder—a government agency or a foundation—can also function as an intermediary is one of the organizational challenges facing intermediary organizations. Because it is a practice used by many intermediaries who are not otherwise funders, we focus here on the use of regranting by intermediaries.

Intermediaries can use regranting as a way to focus attention, disseminate standards, and engage youth-serving organizations in specific improvement efforts. As part of Networks for Youth Development, conceived of and convened by YDI, each of fifteen participating organizations received \$20,000 to use for purposes of organizational improvement—not for direct programming. In working on building the capacity of youth organizations to integrate theme-based literacy activities into after-school programs, YDI was involved in regranting funds raised from the Hayden Foundation. In an RFP, YDI framed the importance of the issue and described effective thematic literacy activities, using the RFP as a strategy for informing the field. YDI also provided assistance to grantees about ways of building these practices into their programs. In this case, regranting was a strategic device for education, persuasion, reinforcement, and ultimately program improvement.

This issue of regranting may be less a matter of role incompatibility than a question of how the regranting is conducted. An intermediary may have to be transparent and consistent in the ways in which money is raised and redistributed so that its purposes are clear and the buy-in of constituents is not compromised. How regranting is appropriately conducted may represent an aspect of good practice for an intermediary. This is an example of the kind of practice that needs to be clarified by intermediaries.

#### **Standard setting and monitoring.**

Another tension is whether an intermediary should be involved both in setting standards and in monitoring whether they are attained. As an example, Pinellas County Juvenile

Welfare Board (JWB) and YouthNet are both participating with youth-serving organizations in defining standards of practice and in monitoring organizations' performance against them.

In conjunction with a committee composed of representatives of small, medium, and large agencies, JWB is developing standards for agency self-evaluation on such aspects of organizational functioning as the nature and status of the following organizational characteristics: mission, strategic plan, board, organizational structure, financial management, contract compliance, personnel, facility safety, and aspects of programming like intake procedures, handling of waiting lists, and volunteer management. In addition, to use as a self-assessment tool, this protocol will be used as the basis of a peer review process in which the review team will be composed of two JWB staff members and one staff member of an external agency. JWB has used the self-assessment process itself, and the tool is now being piloted by seven agencies over the next several months. It will use these standards as the basis of contract compliance and in making grant renewal decisions.

Under its prior president, a principle aspect of YouthNet's agenda was to secure a dedicated source of public financing for youth organizations by placing a tax measure on the local ballot. Given the price tag, its current president, Deborah Craig, noted,

It became clear to me that the best way we could support someday getting a tax initiative . . . is to set out the accountability and quality control systems so that we can guarantee the public. . . that we have systems in place to make sure that their dollars are well spent, and that we can ensure quality programs are purchased with those dollars.

When a YouthNet Board member and program officer of the Kaufman Foundation visited directors of 15 youth-serving agencies, as Deborah Craig sees it, "It came down to 'look, if this is kind of what is coming down the pike, then we'd rather deal with YouthNet, a known quantity'." Craig sees the use of standards and monitoring against them as ways to shape a conversation among funders, providers, and the public about what

resources are needed to work toward meeting these standards.

YouthNet is beginning to design a monitoring process. In Craig's view, the process has to be verifiable and go beyond self-report. It is likely to include a mix of self-assessment, peer assessment, and unexpected drop-in visits in order to identify patterns of organizational performance over time. How information on performance is shared, and with what consequences if an agency does not have the capacity or the will to improve, have to be determined.

The Youth Development Institute has a different stance on monitoring, one that supports involvement in standard setting but not monitoring. In order to secure trust and credibility with youth-serving organizations, YDI's view is that the city is and should be responsible for program monitoring:

We [YDI] are working with the community-based organizations and the city to develop a framework for monitoring that builds on sound principles and practices for youth-development programming. Baring dangerous practices, we would not go directly to the city about problems we observe in particular programs.

There may be different forms of monitoring with different implications for the role and responsibilities of intermediary organizations. Networks for Youth Development established a process in which YDI helped constitute teams with representatives from YDI, members of peer agencies, staff of the agency involved, young people who participate in their programs, and sometimes an outsider. This can be a compelling field-building strategy, and variations of this peer-assessment approach are used by other intermediary organizations. These teams are ways for intermediaries and agencies to learn more about what youth development standards should look like on the ground and to further inform and refine those standards based on practice realities. This approach to monitoring is premised on an assessment process in which agencies are voluntarily engaged. The alternative approach involves contract compliance or performance review tied to funding decisions.

There is both lack of clarity and lack of agreement on what constitutes effective

intermediary practices with regard to monitoring. An intermediary's role in monitoring can be viewed as part of a larger inherent challenge: the need to craft a responsible stance concerning the knowledge to which an intermediary becomes privileged. As Michele Cahill sees it:

Being an intermediary puts us in a position with the most information. Our role is to hold out for people what this information means and to come to a common understanding about it. Our position is not "surveillance" but to help shape proactive, productive ways to respond.

### **Competition with Their Constituency**

There are a number of arenas in which intermediaries risk being seen as competitors or adversaries by the organizations they ostensibly serve. Competition can be a real or perceived problem concerning the funds intermediaries receive, the credit they claim for accomplishments, and the access they have to knowledge and contacts in a broader arena.

**Funding.** Youth-serving organizations may view an intermediary as a competitor for funds, as diverting revenues that otherwise would have come directly to them. Even if an intermediary ends up distributing a significant portion of the funds it takes in, it can be difficult for agencies to avoid seeing an intermediary as siphoning off funds to which they would otherwise have had direct access. This tension is related to the structure of intermediaries and to their accountability—the more directly organizations have a stake in an intermediary and ownership for its agenda, the more relevant and less resented the purposes of funds flowing to an intermediary are likely to be.

**Credit.** How intermediaries and the organizations they serve distribute credit for ideas and improvements in the field is another source of competition and potential conflict—among intermediaries, youth organizations, and other stakeholders. To be successful, an intermediary wants—and needs—its knowledge and ideas to be owned and its assistance to be used, to become part of how the organizations they work with think and function. Although an essential part of an intermediary's orientation involves giving credit to the organizations with which

it works, intermediaries must also be able to demonstrate their own value, and intermediaries' contributions to building capacity can be complex to evaluate (discussed in "outcomes and net added value" below). Giving away credit can leave an intermediary without much to show for its work.

Intermediaries can also contend for credit with other stakeholders, such as the funders of youth organizations. As an intermediary director noted, "It's almost always about turf, ownership, making sure that the intermedi-

*Greater clarity and agreement is needed about the outcomes for which intermediaries are accountable, and about effective processes for demonstrating their added value in terms of improved programs and opportunities for the greatest number of young people.*

ary maintains its capacity to engage with everyone. It's very difficult as an intermediary to be constantly aware of the political context of anything that you say or do." Credit can be ascribed to an intermediary without their having claimed it, for example, when a news article or report describes the Beacons as a program of the Department of Youth and Community Development and the Youth Development Institute. YDI is intimately involved with the Beacons in extremely concrete ways and accurately distinguishing its role can require nuanced understanding.

**Gatekeeping.** Although intermediaries serve as representatives of and a point of contact with the highly diverse field of youth-serving organizations, these organizations can view an intermediary as inhibiting their direct access to contacts and resources. Local organizations can feel (and can in fact be) cut out of interactions with funders, legislators, or other actors, and as a result may see the intermediary as usurping their own direct communication and contacts. Managing this tension is important in the long run for building the capacity of the field. Intermediaries need to find strategies through which they can represent the field without isolating the organizations in it.

## Outcomes and Net Added Value

Intermediaries interested in field building seek to work in ways in which credit for change is owned by and embedded in the field itself. Nevertheless, for their own sustainability, they must also demonstrate the effects of their contributions to youth-serving organizations and, ultimately, to the young people involved with them. Greater clarity and agreement is needed about the outcomes for which intermediaries are accountable, and about effective processes for demonstrating their added value in terms of improved programs and opportunities for the greatest number of young people.

Intermediaries can point to a number of distinct contributions that result from their work. They include:

- *Performance Outputs.* Events or processes an intermediary provides (e.g., training sessions conducted, network meetings organized)
- *Participation.* When not required, participation—agencies involved, youth workers trained—can be a measure of agency and staff engagement, particularly in undertakings that involve significant time and required follow-through
- *Penetration.* Beyond simple counts, percentages of the field engaged by intermediaries can be measures of their reach—for example, the percentage of youth workers trained in a specific kind of organization or geographic area
- *Representation, Advocacy, and Policy Impact.* Intermediaries' advocacy and policy functions (e.g., securing increased funding, legislative initiatives) are also effects of their work
- *Outcomes: Impacts on Field Practices and Performance.* If an intermediary is focused on building the capacity of one kind of program or of the youth-serving organizations in one place, it can be accountable for improvements in the field: for organizational stability, the quality of programs, and the percentage of young people reached

Greater attention to specifying the nature and magnitude of intermediary impacts, the time frames over which change can be expected, and ways of documenting intermediary contributions as compared to other actors and external influences are important issues to address in helping to strengthen intermediary organizations and their contributions.

## Organizational Challenges

Structure, staffing, financing, and issues related to leadership and leadership transitions are organizational constraints under which intermediaries can operate.

### Structure

In the course of this reconnaissance, we encountered a number of issues related to the structure of particular intermediaries. These issues include the benefits and constraints of a government agency serving as an intermediary, of an intermediary operating as a unit within another nonprofit organization, and of structuring an intermediary as a membership organization. In what follows, we note some of the implications of structures we encountered. These comments are related to the particular intermediary structures of the three kinds reflected in the organizations we studied. The extent to which these observations are generalizable is not clear.

### Government Agency

Pinellas County Juvenile Welfare Board is an independent taxing district established to oversee the expenditure of public funds. The Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board is an intergovernmental organization. Two potential advantages and two limitations of government entities serving as an intermediary are:

### Advantages

- *Steady source of income.* Government agencies have access to a more regular source of income than intermediaries in the non-profit sector.

- *Internal advocates.* Agencies within government can serve as advocates within the funding and policy process.

### Limitations

- *Public accountability and oversight.* Government agencies are accountable to the elected officials for whom they work and ultimately to the public. In effect, although government agencies may provide assistance to youth organizations, they are likely to be responsible for providing financial and other forms of oversight as well. Although government policy making and funding make it one of the key actors in shaping and sustaining a youth development field, whether a government agency can serve as an effective intermediary is unclear.
- *Subject to the political process.* Intermediaries within government are subject to the shift in fortunes that often come with changes in elected leadership.

Commenting on the circumstances in which government agencies may be more effective sources of capacity-building assistance, Constancia Warren noted that the nature of the relationship a government department has traditionally had with local agencies may make a difference, for example, in the extent to which there is a stringent, vertical accountability process or more generally supportive relationships with local agencies.<sup>13</sup> How senior and skilled staff are who are serving as intermediaries and their tenure in government may also contribute to the relative ability of government agencies to provide capacity-building assistance.

Although some of these factors, positive and negative, may make a difference, government's funding and policy role and its accountability to the public complicate the

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<sup>13</sup> In commenting, Constancia Warren drew on the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development's role in the Beacons Initiative and on the role of the New Jersey Department of Human Services in providing assistance to the School Based Youth Services Program. Warren is a Senior Program Officer at the Academy for Educational Development (AED) and a lead researcher both in the New Jersey evaluation and in the evaluation of the Beacons Initiative.

capacity of a government agency to serve as an effective youth development intermediary.

### ***Division of a Nonprofit Organization***

The Youth Development Institute is structured in a unique manner compared to other intermediaries drawn on in this report. YDI is a division of the Fund for the City of New York, an operating foundation that itself provides intermediary functions. From interviews with Michele Cahill and Mary Mc-

*... government's funding and policy role and its accountability to the public complicate the capacity of a government agency to serve as an effective youth development intermediary.*

Cormick, President of the Fund, there appear to be both benefits and constraints of this arrangement. Some of these trade-offs are likely to exist for an intermediary operating as a unit of another nonprofit organization whether or not it also is an intermediary.

- *Administrative support.* The Fund provides the full panoply of administrative support for YDI—the physical facility; payroll, auditing and other fiscal functions; phone service; computers, copying, and other equipment; and the like—so that YDI can focus on its field-building endeavors and fundraising to support them.
- *Cash flow coverage.* YDI is protected from fluctuations in cash flow as a division of the Fund.
- *Credibility and contacts.* In addition to YDI's own credibility, it can draw on the credibility and contacts of the Fund.
- *Collegial support.* Running a small organization can be isolating. The Fund provides access to colleagues and ways of thinking from a variety of disciplines.
- *Oversight and assistance in transitions.* The Fund operates on a university model. The president of the Fund performs a role in relation to YDI analogous to a university president's toward a department. As a

result, there is a dynamic between autonomy and central cohesion that plays out between them. As with a university department, the Fund has an institutional commitment to YDI that can support it during transitions in leadership.

- *Overhead contributions and costs.* The Fund charges overhead on all funds raised by YDI. It also offsets these costs by providing a percentage of its core grant from the Ford Foundation for use by YDI.
- *Operational constraints.* As a part of a larger organization, YDI's options can be limited. As an example, YDI had not created its own board of directors to help guide and validate its work. As part of the recent transition in leadership, YDI is now developing an external advisory group.

### ***A Membership Organization***

The Chicago Youth Area Partnership is a membership organization as are other intermediaries. For example, United Neighborhood Houses is an association of settlement houses in New York that often provide youth programs. Two primary structural features of membership organizations were mentioned in interviews.

- *Accountability.* In a membership organization, representatives of member organizations sit on the board of directors, making the organization directly accountable to the membership.
- *Impact on competition for funds.* Membership organizations may offset the problem of competition for funds between an intermediary and its constituency in that representatives of the membership are part of the decision making about what work and associated funds to pursue.

### ***Staffing***

Finding and keeping qualified staff is a challenge for intermediary organizations. Staff were described as needing a unique combination of knowledge and skills. They need to have:



- the knowledge base and skills to do the work, including an understanding and commitment to an asset-based approach
- the capacity to build relationships
- an appreciation for the field of practice, of those who are actually doing the work
- the ability to work with multiple stakeholders, including staff at different levels in youth-serving organizations, people in other sectors including schools, and often representatives of funders, researchers, and others
- a commitment to making a difference, while being content not to take the credit or contest for visibility with practitioners, funders, government agencies, and others with whom intermediaries work

One of the intermediary directors reflected comments of others:

You can find people with a part of these skills—someone who really gets management development, but doesn't have a clue about youth development, or someone who is operating from an academic, didactic model and doesn't have an appreciation for practitioners. Then you have the youth worker who gets kids, but has no theoretical framework, and who cannot work. . .with multiple stakeholders on multiple levels, or you have the kid who is fresh out of college but who can't garner the respect of the practitioners, who has no real-world experience to play off of. Those are a complex set of skills to find in a single person.

Several directors noted that it is important that staff be members of the race/ethnicity and cultures of many frontline workers and participants in youth-serving organizations. A resulting challenge is that staff with these backgrounds and capabilities can often be drawn away by other promising career opportunities.

### **Sustainability**

There were intermediaries across the spectrum of maturity—from the least to the most

well-established—that identified the need to solve funding problems as critical to their sustainability. The following summarizes sources of intermediary financing and challenges associated with sustaining funding.

### **Source of Funds**

The principal sources of funds for the seven organizations drawn on in this paper are foundation grants and contracts, membership dues, client fees, and government funding.

- All intermediaries in this study rely principally, some exclusively, on foundation funding. In almost all cases, these funds are earmarked for specific programmatic efforts rather than core support.
- When structured as membership organizations, member dues appear to be a small percentage of an intermediary's budget. Nevertheless, these funds represent an important stake in ownership by member agencies and are a source of flexible funding.
- Among the intermediaries in this study, Community Partners is alone in charging a fee of 9 percent for the ongoing management assistance it provides to organizations in its incubator program. These funds are the source of CP's core operating budget. In some cases, CP charges a fee for consultation with individual organizations.
- Although they are not the exclusive source of funds, government funding provides the lion's share of the budgets for both the Pinellas County Juvenile Welfare Board and the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board.

### **Absence of a Regular Source of Funds**

Intermediaries dependent on foundation funding commented on the absence of a regular source of funds. For some intermediaries, grant writing is seen as part of a field-building process, as an opportunity to shape a vision and engage funders in it. However, as an observer commented, "As long as you're dependent on foundation funding, you're constantly having to raise those funds."

Particularly for new organizations, fundraising can be a demanding task. An intermediary director noted:

This is always my frustration with foundations. They are critical for funding groups like this one, but it takes so much of your time to get them to fund you, and that's time taken away from the real work. It's very easy for me to spend 6 months a year just on fund raising.

Richard Murphy, Director of the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research at AED, commented on the importance of creating an intermediary and initially protecting it so that it can operate effectively. One strategy he noted is to ensure a core demand for an intermediary's services as the Beacons Initiative did for YDI.

The role of even experienced intermediaries can be constrained if funders misunderstand the work entailed and by the typical duration of foundation grants. Michele Cahill notes that some funders would wonder after a year of support why network meetings among youth organizations could not be self-sustaining. However, as Cahill

continue the work presents additional challenges of engaging people not involved in conceptualizing the initial agenda to support an ongoing endeavor.

### ***Lack of Core Operating Support***

Intermediary operations can be constrained and, in the best case, be made far more complex by the lack of general operating support. As Mary McCormick noted, "Funding drawn solely from project grants limits an ability to take a longer perspective, to seed ideas, and get them off the ground. . . Core support allows you that margin for innovation that you don't have if every dollar is tied up in a particular project."

On a day-to-day basis, intermediaries commented that the absence of some financial flexibility is troubling. For example, whenever staff are involved in efforts not explicitly written into existing grants, like attending national meetings, an intermediary has to find a project budget against which to charge that time. Although many nonprofit organizations do not have and could benefit from a core of flexible funds, their absence may be particularly constraining for intermediaries. To be effective, intermediaries need to be able to give some attention to the broader policy arenas in order to identify effective intersections of interests and opportunities for building the field. By its very nature, this work is not solely project specific. In addition, it is difficult to plan and implement a long term field building agenda with year-to-year project-based funding.

### ***Covering Overhead Costs***

Like other organizations, intermediaries that raise their entire budgets from foundations find overhead costs hard to recover. Foundations almost always provide less money for overhead costs than the actual expenses. These expenses include costs for facilities rental and operations; administrative functions like personnel, finance and accounting; and infrastructure costs like equipment purchase and maintenance including computer hardware and support. As happens with other foundation grantees, the difficulty of recovering overhead costs constrains intermediaries in building their own organizational infrastructures.

In some ways, financing problems are compounded for intermediaries as their entire

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points out, networking groups need informed and ongoing sources of support. For example, for a committee of agency staff engaged in defining core youth worker competencies, YDI's role was to organize and staff meetings and record what happened at them, to research issues on which the group had difficulty, to provide information about how other groups around the country were defining staff competencies, to organize focus groups of young people from member agencies to identify what young people look for in a youth worker, to draft and revise statements of competencies based on members' work, and to plan how to translate these competencies into training curricula and processes for agency observation and assessment.

Once a foundation's 2 to 3 years of grant support runs out, finding other funders to

operations are devoted to the somewhat intangible process of strengthening the programmatic and organizational infrastructure of youth-serving organizations. In this sense, supporting intermediaries can be an unfamiliar expenditure for foundations, more experienced and often more comfortable with funding direct services.

### **Leadership and Leadership Transitions**

At their current stage of development, intermediaries in the youth development field were described as “leader-identified organizations”—organizations that take on the interests and reflect the skills of the individuals who run them.

Skilled leadership calls for people who were characterized as having a social-change orientation, who see opportunities for moving forward and strategies for capitalizing on them, and who can maneuver between the provider world and the set of other institutions that can affect the current functioning and futures of provider organizations. As a director commented, “You have to remain in a position that is seen as neutral, nonthreatening enough so that you can really move the core concept and the strategies and not get diverted by position or politics or credit.”

A director noted that a necessary prerequisite is having curiosity about all aspects of the field and about those stakeholders who inform and can influence it. Leaders of intermediaries should have the ability to put themselves in someone else’s place while also maintaining objectivity about how to move that person and their organization to contribute to a field-building goal. Put somewhat differently, an observer noted, “I think to be an intermediary, an effective one, you need to have a profound respect for the complexity of the jobs of those you’re working with.”

Effective leaders were described as often being people with strong backgrounds in practice experience—people who have done something creative like organizing, advocacy, teaching and training, or other practice endeavors. In addition, they have to

be “quiet leaders,” people who are not bombastic, who can negotiate and persevere.

Finding people with these skills and inclinations is one obvious challenge. A second is understanding and developing the kinds of training and support enabling intermediary leaders to persevere effectively.

### **Turnover**

A number of directors, both newer and more experienced, described the job of leading an intermediary organization as wearing and isolating. One noted,

I don’t know that I have ever felt so incredibly alone in a job. And I don’t like it. It’s incredibly draining. . . . And I have grown tired. Not because I think that I’m not making progress because I clearly see the progress. But I don’t think it’s healthy for a job to be that draining.

Transition in leadership is a key challenge facing intermediary organizations. The set of skills characterizing effective leadership can be difficult to replace, particularly given the constellation of funding, staffing, and other programmatic and operational challenges confronting intermediaries. But transition in intermediary leadership is a fairly steady reality. Five of the eight directors of the intermediary organizations included in an AED study have left their organizations since the study was completed roughly 18 months ago.<sup>14</sup> Renae Ogletree is CYAP’s second director since it was established in 1994. Deborah Craig, YouthNet’s current president noted that, in the organization’s 8 years, she is the fourth leader and YouthNet has had three different boards in the same period.

### **Common Challenges**

It is worth noting that the challenges facing intermediary organizations parallel those confronting youth-serving organizations. Both intermediaries and the organizations they serve lack agreement about programmatic standards—about what constitutes good practice. Considering that the field of youth development has not reached consen-

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<sup>14</sup> Leadership has changed hands at the Urban Strategies Council, the Indiana Youth Institute, YouthNet, the Youth Development Institute of the Fund for the City of New York, and the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Council.

sus about the youth outcomes it is responsible for enhancing, it is a corresponding, if more complex, challenge for intermediaries to specify the added value of their assistance. Both groups of organizations share similar problems of staffing, funding, and leadership. Given the pivotal role and impact of intermediaries and their growing number, this appears to be a high-stakes and high-payoff period in which to gain greater clarity about the challenges facing intermediaries and strategies for addressing them.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

The importance of intermediary organizations is underscored by the absence of a clear mandate for and recognition of the youth development field, and by the variety of youth-serving organizations in the field and the challenges they face, challenges described in the first section of this report. In representing the field and working directly with youth-serving organizations, local intermediaries are addressing challenges that directly affect the size, stability, and quality of available programs, and the skills of the young people who use them.

Local intermediary organizations are uniquely positioned to make a difference in the capacity and impact of youth-serving organizations and, thereby, to the children and families they serve. By structuring and staffing networking opportunities among practitioners, policy makers, funders, and others, intermediaries are helping to build a sense of identification with the field and an emerging consensus on its mission and goals, on standards for program practices, relevant staff competencies, and resulting outcomes for youth. At the core of their activities, intermediaries are working with youth-serving organizations helping to increase the quantity and quality of programs for young people and to strengthen the structure and management of organizations so that they are better able to sustain what they provide.

At the same time, intermediaries face a number of challenges that appear to compromise their current contributions and their sustainability. Finding ways to strengthen and sustain local intermediaries can reinforce a core of organizations grounded in understanding the mix of needs and opportunities among local youth-serving organizations and

positioned to make a significant contribution to their functioning and effectiveness and, in turn, to the contributions of youth organizations to the lives of young people.

## **VI. AFTERWORD**

As a postscript to this report, I want to comment on some of the challenges facing intermediaries and to pass on possible strategies for addressing them suggested in the course of this study.

### **Issues About Which Greater Clarity Is Needed**

Greater attention to and clarity about a number of outstanding issues concerning intermediary organizations could help inform their operations and impacts. These issues include effective practices for intermediaries, their structure, sustainability, and outcomes. In my view, the ambiguity about these issues compromises the nature and quality of contributions local intermediaries can make. These are issues on which there is likely to be greater clarity and potential consensus if additional attention is paid to learning about them in concert with the intermediaries themselves and with other stakeholders.

### **Effective Intermediary Practices**

There are differing positions among the intermediaries in this study on issues related to effective practices. These differences include their orientation to assistance (how much weight is given to the priorities and resident expertise of the field and to the knowledge brought by the intermediary), their primary accountability (to the organizations they serve, their funders, to children and parents), and on role tensions (including whether and how an intermediary can be involved in both grantmaking and capacity building or in standard setting and monitoring). Grappling with these differences—or clarifying circumstances in which differing positions are useful and appropriate—would contribute to a better-articulated and more widely understood set of effective practices for intermediary organizations.

Because of time constraints, the views of youth organizations served by intermediaries were missing from the evidence collected for this report. The experience and perspectives of youth-serving organizations,

fundors, and other stakeholders would provide more solid evidence on which to base discussion and informed decisions about effective intermediary practices. It would be useful to seek the views of these “consumers” on issues including intermediary orientations toward assistance, their accountability, and role tensions particularly concerning grantmaking and monitoring, in sum, about what kinds of intermediary roles and practices are most engaging and productive.

### Structure

There are a number of outstanding questions about the structure of intermediary organizations. A central question is whether, or the circumstances under which, government agencies can serve effectively as youth development intermediaries. Some intermediaries and observers take the position that government agencies have too much authority as funding and policymaking bodies to effectively engage youth organizations in a capacity-building process. Moreover, government accountability is to elected leadership and ultimately to the public rather than to youth organizations. Their view is that both authority and accountability concerns are likely to compromise government capacity as a youth development intermediary. Greater understanding of the role and relative effectiveness of government intermediaries is important to clarifying these concerns. If intermediaries are expected to contribute to field- and capacity-building goals, it is important to clarify the circumstances in which government agencies can fulfill these expectations.

Similarly, structuring intermediaries as membership organizations was cited as a benefit precisely because they are then directly accountable to their members. As part of clarifying the relative benefits and limitations of alternative structures for intermediary organizations, it would be useful to better understand the value of structuring an intermediary as a membership organization.

### Sustainability

There were intermediaries across the spectrum of maturity that identified the need to solve funding problems as critical to their sustainability. In considering support for intermediaries, it is important to better under-

stand their current financing and financial constraints than has been possible in the course of this reconnaissance. It would be helpful to better understand the need for a more steady source of funding and for core operating support. For which intermediaries are these options a critical priority? What percentage of core support is necessary or desirable? What proportion of intermediary budgets should be assured? For what duration—a

*. . . highlighting the role of intermediaries and their value in contributing to the programming and sustainability of youth-serving organizations is part of what is needed in enhancing intermediary access to existing sources and kinds of funds.*

start-up period? Indefinitely? How might alternative funding strategies affect the functioning of intermediary organizations, relationships with funders, and the dynamics with organizations intermediaries serve?

It may be that highlighting the role of intermediaries and their value in contributing to the programming and sustainability of youth-serving organizations is part of what is needed in enhancing intermediary access to existing sources and kinds of funds. Defining and finding ways to document the outcomes and added value of intermediary contributions would also add to an understanding of their impacts and a willingness to fund their ongoing operations.

During the course of this study, several strategies were suggested for providing a more constant source of financing for intermediaries and a source of core operating support. One proposed strategy was that program grants to youth-serving organizations be increased by a percentage designated for use for training, technical assistance, or other forms of intermediary assistance, enabling organizations to contract with the intermediary of their choice. An additional proposal was that funders reserve a percentage of program grants for direct support of intermediary organizations both to provide core operating support and to fund field building activities across youth-serving organizations,

including convening and knowledge transfer, dissemination, and the like.

### Outcomes

Evidence from documentation and evaluation studies would inform discussion of intermediary outcomes and the added value of intermediary assistance. Some of this evidence is beginning to come from evaluations of the Beacons Initiative and others in which youth development intermediaries have a role. Additional opportunities to work with experienced intermediaries interested in clarifying the outcomes for which they are responsible and evaluating the circumstances and extent to which these outcomes are real-

*Networking opportunities could provide a venue for engaging intermediaries and other stakeholders in clarification of a number of the programmatic and organizational challenges facing intermediaries including those discussed above: effective practices, alternative structures, financing, sustainability, and outcomes.*

ized could inform discussion with intermediaries about their contributions and strategies for enhancing them.

There are a number of complementary ways of clarifying outstanding issues concerning intermediary operations and impacts. They can be pursued through better understanding the perspectives of youth-serving organizations and other intermediary stakeholders, through more intensive studies, and through convening intermediary organizations and other stakeholders, which has benefits in its own right.

### Convening

It is likely that intermediary organizations would benefit from a number of strategies they have used in their work with youth-serving organizations. Opportunities for convening intermediaries would be a way to alleviate a number of challenges they face and to address outstanding issues related to their work and role. As in their own work with youth-serving organizations, to be effective, knowledge from theory, research, and practice coupled

with ongoing staff assistance is needed for informing and ensuring a useful process.

Opportunities for ongoing interaction and more in-depth discussion were requested by intermediaries and suggested by observers of them. It was pointed out that these opportunities should engage stakeholders horizontally and vertically. They should involve local intermediaries themselves as well as provide forums that include opportunities to hear from and inform national and local-level policy makers, funders, and consumers with a stake in the youth development field and in the intermediary organizations that are part of it.

Networking opportunities could provide a venue for engaging intermediaries and other stakeholders in clarification of a number of the programmatic and organizational challenges facing intermediaries including those discussed above: effective practices, alternative structures, financing, sustainability, and outcomes.

Intermediary directors expressed interest in increased access to each other and to forums for discussion of policy issues and opportunities at the national level. They also wanted increased opportunities to contribute the experience and perspectives gained from their work in local settings to informing national agenda setting by public and private funders and legislators. Forums among local intermediaries and opportunities for exchange with actors in the national policy debate could deepen both policy- and practice-level understanding of opportunities for field building and strategies for capitalizing on them.

It may also be useful to include the national youth development intermediaries in some forums of these kinds. National and local intermediaries are likely to face many of the same challenges and would benefit from the exchange of perspectives among themselves and with actors in the national policy debate and policy making process.

There are alternative ways of sponsoring and staffing networking or convening opportunities. One or more individuals respected by the intermediaries could create opportunities for convening and exchange, a foundation could perform these functions, an existing national intermediary could take on this function or parts of it, or a new organization could be tapped for this purpose.

## Some Final Thoughts

In the course of this study, I had difficulty learning about what organizations are part of the universe of local youth development intermediaries. This uncertainty is precisely because they work in local geographic areas and there is apparently no single place or person with an inventory of these organizations or an understanding of their basic characteristics. Knowledge about them is also incomplete because, with growing acknowledgment of a youth development orientation and increased emphasis on the importance of after-school time, there are opportunities for additional organizations to take on intermediary roles. In addition, the increasing numbers of local governments seeking ways to create a tax-based revenue stream for youth programs provide added opportunities for the input of intermediaries. (In these situations, it would be interesting to know the extent to which local governments are acting in an intermediary capacity themselves.) Better understanding of the current universe of local youth development intermediaries and clarifying outstanding issues about their work and role would help to inform their functioning and effectiveness as well as that of newly forming intermediaries.

It also would be helpful to identify the extent and status of organizations providing generic forms of technical assistance that can be accessed by youth-serving organizations. These kinds of assistance include consultation on issues like board development,

and assistance in developing administrative functions like human resources, financing, or facilities management. These functions do not necessarily have to be tailored exclusively to youth-serving organizations but if they do not exist in a form accessible to youth organizations, it may be worth considering supporting the creation or expansion of organizations that could assist with some of these kinds of functions. As Community Partners currently does and YouthNet is considering taking on, it may be worth examining the benefits of intermediaries performing some of these functions on an ongoing basis, particularly for smaller organizations.

This study focused principally on understanding intermediaries at a particular point in time rather than on the ways in which they evolved. In conjunction with considering strategies for supporting local intermediaries, it would be useful to better understand what successful strategies are for supporting the creation of new intermediary organizations. An allied issue is whether and under what conditions it is possible for an existing intermediary focused on particular functions, like youth worker training, to successfully expand the range of resources they offer, for example, convening policy makers, practitioners and others. Put somewhat differently, it would be helpful to know what range of resources and assistance effectively support the expansion of functions an intermediary performs.

## APPENDIX A

### LITERATURE RELATED TO THE ROLE OF LOCAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INTERMEDIARIES

The following is literature focusing on intermediary organizations relevant to the work of local intermediaries in the youth development field.

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## APPENDIX B

### INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

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As Chair of one of the Center's principal areas of research, Ms. Wynn is leading research focusing on the rela-

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Ms. Wynn majored in philosophy and social anthropology at Sarah Lawrence College and studied philosophy at Yale University graduate school with a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship.

## Related Chapin Hall Publications

*Children, Families, and Communities: A New Approach to Social Services*

Joan Wynn, Joan Costello, Robert Halpern, Harold Richman 1994

*Evaluation of the MOST Initiative*

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